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Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4611th meeting

Thursday, 19 September 2002, 10.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Tafrov	(Bulgaria)
Members:	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Singapore	Ms. Foo
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan.

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02-59584 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Afghanistan, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Brahimi to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in the course of its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

I now give the floor to Mr. Brahimi.

Mr. Brahimi: I am honoured to have been asked to come once again before the Council to brief members on the situation in Afghanistan. It is also an honour for me, Sir, to speak under your presidency.

The General Assembly and the gathering of senior ministers from more than 20 nations last Friday in support of Afghanistan offered a timely opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to Afghanistan and to reflect on what has been achieved and, more important, on what still must be done. Careful stock-taking is required as the Transitional Authority initiates its two-year mandate and begins to grapple with the challenges of consolidating peace in Afghanistan.

The assassination attempt on President Karzai on 5 September and the car bombing in Kabul the same day once again illustrate the difficult security environment that the Transitional Administration is facing. It is also a fact that the people of Afghanistan expect real improvement in their daily lives. The prestige and legitimacy of the Transitional Administration will depend, therefore, on its ability to address effectively the most pressing security and recovery needs. Should it fail, fragmentation will become more entrenched, extremism will rise, and then foreign countries, groups and individuals may be drawn once again into the fray and the resumption of widespread violence will most likely ensue.

Nevertheless, Afghanistan has come a long way. It would have been inconceivable just a year ago to imagine an Afghan President, elected by secret ballot, standing before the General Assembly and outlining a vision of an Afghan State determined to modernize itself, building on the rich heritage of Islamic civilization to promote justice, the rule of law, human rights and freedom — an Afghanistan determined to promote tolerance and achieve prosperity. These are noble and worthwhile objectives, but President Karzai knows better than anyone else — and he said so himself last week on every occasion — that Afghanistan will not achieve these goals without committed, sustained and generous support from the international community.

Facing the twin challenges of security and recovery is not something that the Transitional Administration can achieve alone. It simply does not have the resources. Major infrastructure projects — in transport and roads, energy and telecommunications, mines and industry, water and agriculture — that can bring jobs, improve economic and trade prospects and facilitate foreign investment require a very significant financial and technical input from outside Afghanistan.

Last week's announcement of a $180-million aid package from the United States of America, Japan and Saudi Arabia for road construction is an extremely positive development. We are also heartened by the European Union's pledge to rehabilitate the Kabul to Jalalabad road.

But we must remember that, today, the Transitional Administration in Afghanistan lacks the very modest budget required to meet its basic recurrent costs. I hope that the donors have heard President Karzai's urgent appeal and I hope that we all remember the comments made in Tokyo by the Secretary-General to the effect that today's millions are worth tomorrow's billions.

It is also important to note, again with President Karzai, that most international funding is still going to humanitarian assistance, which is necessary but not quite sufficient to bring back peace and stability to the country. Without massive job creation, the country cannot handle some of the most immediate peace-building tasks. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have to be created to enable impoverished Afghans to earn a living and climb out of debt, and to accommodate the flow of returning refugees, mainly from Pakistan and Iran. Hundreds of thousands more jobs need to be created for comprehensive disarmament and reintegration to be achieved or for viable alternatives to poppy cultivation to be offered. In a stable and safe society, employment-generation on this scale would be expected to result largely from private investment. In the context of Afghanistan today, there is no immediate alternative to international public investment. This may seem an ambitious undertaking. It is, however, the price that, I hope, the international community will help Afghanistan pay for peace and stability.

One way of achieving this is through a concerted strategy that links assistance priorities to the requirements of political reconstruction and stability. It is necessary to accelerate the implementation of nationwide programmes, such as the World Bank-supported National Solidarity Programme, which aims to inject income into communities through large labour-intensive and cash-for-work schemes. The focus of these projects will be on essential economic and social infrastructure, such as the rehabilitation of feeder roads, local water works, schools and health centres.

The Transitional Administration needs urgent financial assistance at the moment for its ambitious project of introducing a new currency. Much work has been done already and, if all goes well, the operation will begin early next month. The United Nations believes that the initiative will have a very positive impact on promoting national unity, economic stability and social cohesion. As part of this process, the Government of Afghanistan will also address the revitalization of the financial and banking systems throughout the country. The United Nations is supporting this process by assisting in the procurement, logistics, planning and monitoring of the operation. I urge the international community to respond positively to the Afghan Administration's request for donor support for this very important nationwide exercise.

The Transitional Administration is taking a leadership role in planning for the future and the United Nations is committed to supporting the Government in the development of the national development framework and the national budget in the coming month. Ministers have been encouraged to establish their own vision and priorities. The Minister of Education, for example, has already set the priorities for education for the next 18 months, reinforcing a very simple message: a roof for every school, a textbook for every child, and tables and chairs for every classroom.

One aim of the United Nations is to support and help develop the capacity of the Government. The Afghan cabinet and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) are working together to accelerate the development of the Government, to decentralize assistance and develop sub-national programmes tailored to the needs of individual provinces, and to develop a more integrated and cost-effective United Nations response.

Progress has already been made and the United Nations is helping national authorities to assume an increasingly central role in the coordination of assistance. An increasing number of United Nations personnel are being located in Government offices to support the Transitional Administration in the development of its policies and activities. The United Nations is supporting Government institutions to develop national information, vulnerability analysis and nutrition surveillance systems and to track donor support and aid flows. These are functions that the United Nations itself was performing alone less than 12 months ago. In the coming months, this support should

be further developed with an overall capacity-building plan that focuses on civil service reform and the increasing decentralization of integrated United Nations assistance at the provincial level.

The communiqué which was issued by senior ministers last week after the high-level ad hoc meeting on Afghanistan signalled the international community's recognition of the most serious challenge facing Afghanistan today — security. President Karzai and the Secretary-General, along with almost everyone in Afghanistan, have repeatedly called for the expansion of the International Security Assistance Force. This has not been possible. As a result, people in Afghanistan, as well as in neighbouring countries, are disappointed and concerned. But there is now a growing realization that the efforts of the Afghans in the field of security need to be supported more directly and more effectively and I very much hope that focused discussions will soon take place on this issue in Kabul, with the participation of Afghan authorities, the United Nations and key members of the international community. The rationale behind the need for international cooperation in that regard is very simple: Afghanistan does not have a national army; it does not have a national police; and it will take some time to build both.

The Afghans themselves realize that they need to do much better than they have done so far in this regard and a significant part of the work of the Government, in cooperation with the United Nations and other partners, must concentrate in the weeks to come on these issues. Before the end of the year, Afghanistan should have a credible and achievable agenda to build a national army and a national police that will progressively take over from the present factional and de facto forces all over the country. This requires demobilizing many of the currently armed elements and helping them to reintegrate into civilian society. It also requires training and inducting new elements, and it requires reorganizing and reforming the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, and the intelligence services.

The first two months of the Transitional Administration have seen a proliferation of local conflicts and violence. The United Nations itself has been the target of terrorist acts on three separate occasions these past two months. Two of these attacks were reported in previous briefings to the Council — that is, the grenade thrown into the compound of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Kandahar on 3 August, and the bomb placed against the wall of the United Nations guest house in Kabul on 25 August. The United Nations Children's Fund's compound in Jalalabad was the target of a rocket attack just two days ago. In these three incidents, a little Afghan girl was wounded in Kabul, and a security guard also suffered injury in the recent attack in Jalalabad.

Only once in the past was the United Nations the target of violence in Afghanistan, and that was when Colonel Calo, a military advisor for the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), was assassinated in Kabul in 1998. The United Nations is serving the people of Afghanistan. It is feeding the hungry, providing clean water to families, attending to the sick, helping kids go to school, and helping refugees and internally displaced persons to return home. It is also working with all Afghans to rebuild what has been destroyed by 23 years of conflict. Afghans of all walks of life understand fully the importance of the United Nations for them and for their country. That is why they spontaneously come, after each incident, to express solidarity and sympathy and to condemn these acts, which they consider as being directed at the people of Afghanistan as a whole.

These incidents are of some concern, as is the continuing violence across Afghanistan. While there have been recent sporadic localized clashes in several parts of the country, the situation is now, however, calmer compared to previous weeks. Tensions had been particularly acute in the north and the south-east, but within the last few days there have been positive developments in those troubled and troublesome areas. The two main rival factions in the north, Jamiat and Jumbesh, agreed to establish a joint force to tackle violence and instability. The force would disarm all parties involved in fomenting conflict. The long awaited demilitarization of the main northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif started last week. All major commanders present in Mazar have withdrawn outside the city boundaries with their weapons and ammunition. Controls by the police and members of the Security Commission are ongoing, and have resulted in the disarmament of the remaining small detachments. The leaders of Jumbesh and Jamiat in the area, Generals Dostum and Atta, announced that in the future there would be no place for small commanders who fight for personal benefit.

In the south-east, Pacha Khan Zadran, who has been a thorn in the Government's side, declared his opposition to President Karzai and his Government's appointed local representatives, but was forced out of Khost when the local governor launched an offensive that succeeded in removing Zadran's forces from the city. Several people died, unfortunately, when the city was rocketed by Zadran's retreating troops, but fighting subsided after three days, on 10 September. The United Nations has now been able to resume its operations in the area.

In the last briefing to the Security Council on Afghanistan, the question of transitional justice was raised in relation to the publicity surrounding the site of a mass grave in Dasht-e-Leili, near Shiberghan. I think it is fairly certain that a large number of people died in — to say the least — suspicious circumstances. Nonetheless, the leaders of the major factions of the north have issued a statement jointly rejecting the allegations that Taliban prisoners suffocated in containers on their way to Shiberghan prison. They also expressed their willingness to cooperate with any investigations, provided that they were carried out by experts in an objective and impartial way. UNAMA's human rights team travelled to the north to seek further information from the signatories of the statement. The Transitional Administration and the Afghan Human Rights Commission have agreed that an investigation of several sites, including one or more where the bodies were presumed to be the victims of the Taliban, should now take place. UNAMA has been in touch with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ask for assistance in identifying the forensic teams needed to carry out this task. Additional security will be needed from the Government, local authority and the international community to help the investigators carry out this work. A word of caution, however: it will probably — probably — be possible to do the forensic part of the investigation. Whether and when it will be possible to actually conclude the investigation is another matter. Ensuring the security of potential witnesses, as well as the security of the investigating teams, is, of course, of paramount importance, and, as things stand at the moment, by no means certain.

In the face of the many difficulties along the path to the restoration of security and prosperity in Afghanistan, I have been advocating that the international community should show neither panic nor complacency. We have been very lucky in Kabul during the first six months of 2002. None of the rocket attacks recorded between April and June caused any casualties. The people of Afghanistan showed great patience and enthusiasm throughout the Loya Jirga process, in spite of uncertainty about security and economic hardships. This may have bred a little complacency and a sense that the peace process in Afghanistan can be achieved at low cost to the international community. Let the near miss of the attempt on the life of President Karzai, the tragedy of the car bombing in Kabul on 5 September and the expressions of frustration from ordinary Afghans concerning recovery be a wake-up call for all of us, Afghans and internationals alike. The oil tanker carrying explosives that was captured near Kabul on 14 September reconfirms that there are people out there who are intent on continuing the deadly cycle of violence.

To borrow from the statement of the Secretary-General after the assassination attempt on President Karzai's life and the car bombing, we trust that these setbacks will only strengthen the resolve of the international community and the legitimate Afghan authorities to bring security and stability to Afghanistan.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the international community for its sustained interest and its support for Afghanistan, but time is of the essence. In the months following the anniversary of the 11 September attacks and in the few weeks before the anniversary of the Bonn Agreement, I hope that the international community will turn its undoubted commitment to Afghanistan into more forceful action.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ambassador Brahimi for his very comprehensive briefing. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of this subject.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.